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this is a very different thing from proposing to set the Epistle of Barnabas side by side with—or before—the Epistle to the Hebrews, and give Clement's Epistle and the Didache a place in the teaching of the church. When the author proposes this he has left the ground of historical investigation and will not find many followers. Few, however, will withhold their assent when, at the close of his discussion, he asks, "What, then, is the secret of the remarkable influence of the New Testament?" and answers "Christ."

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**The Early Traditions of Genesis.** By PROFESSOR A. R. GORDON. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. Pp. 348. \$2.25.

In this very readable and at the same time scholarly book, Professor Gordon has given us a valuable contribution on an already much studied theme. He sets for himself the task of estimating afresh the value of the early Hebrew traditions in the light of modern research and aims to ascertain their real character and significance. The emphasis is laid upon their moral and religious character wherein lies their permanent value.

Professor Gordon begins with a careful analysis of the documents in which he discriminates between an older nucleus used by J and various later Jahvistic traditions, the secondary J document and the P document. In the second chapter he discusses the age and relation of the documents. He agrees with the generally accepted date—*circa* 850 B.C. or very shortly after—for the time when the J document took form, but believes it probable that the older nucleus should be dated as early as the reign of Solomon. The secondary element, known as J<sup>2</sup>, shows close acquaintance with the chief cities of Babylonia and Assyria and also a somewhat detailed knowledge of Babylonian traditions, and since the narrative is most likely Judean in origin, it is dated shortly after 735–734 B.C. when the compact of Ahaz with Tiglath-Pileser III drew the southern kingdom into the maelstrom of Assyrian politics. This narrative, however, could hardly have been written after the invasion of Sennacherib (701 B.C.) which roused strong opposition to Assyrian influence. P, showing intimate knowledge of and literary dependence upon Babylonian traditions, was composed by priestly writers in Babylonia shortly before 444 B.C.

The author then proceeds to investigate by the comparative method the sources of these traditions. Starting with the story of the Flood, he points out the close resemblances which clearly show that the biblical narratives

were derived from the older Babylonian tradition. The account of P reveals closer affinities than that of J<sup>2</sup>, hence the latter was dependent for his material on oral tradition whilst the former had more direct access to original sources. The differences, however, are more important and indicate that the Babylonian narrative was recast by Bible writers in their own spirit. It is here that the distinctive value of the biblical traditions is to be found. The Babylonian contains a medley of confused gods charged with strong passions, destroying the human race for the sins of a few. The moral tone is low. Ut-napishtim was not saved for his piety, but because he was a favorite of Ea. The record of Genesis with its one sovereign and righteous God, who destroys the sinner but saves the righteous and who is full of tender compassion, stands out in bright contrast to its Babylonian precursor. Although the reader will agree with Professor Gordon in maintaining the vast superiority of the biblical narratives, it is hard to escape the feeling that he has not done full justice to the religious value of the Babylonian narrative. Bel, in an outburst of wrath, destroyed innocent and guilty alike, but Ea's reproof of him for this very thing indicates a demand for righteousness in a god on the part of the ancient Babylonian myth-builders. Moreover, the comparison is made between Hebrew traditions dating from the fifth and eighth centuries B.C. and the Babylonian account of some twelve or fifteen hundred years earlier, but in the version of Berosus, Xisuthros, his wife, his daughter, and his steersman, are rewarded for their *piety* with the gift of immortality and those who remained of his party were bidden by a voice from heaven *to be pious*. In the Creation story, the author again finds that P had access to Babylonian sources, yet the biblical account has been so wrought that it excludes all traces of the mythology with which the Babylonian account is saturated. One exception is found in *Tehom* (=Tiamat) but even this becomes only "a dead inert mass of primeval matter." The universe is the work of one self-consistent and omnipotent Being. The story of Eden was ultimately Babylonian in origin, but its profoundly ethical character marks it Israelitish in its present form. No real parallel to the story of the Fall has been brought to light thus far among Babylonian records. With the most recent scholars, and against Friedrich Delitzsch, the famous cylinder with the two figures, the serpent and the sacred tree, is not so interpreted. The following conclusions are reached in regard to the extent of Babylonian influence. J, with one doubtful exception, shows no trace of it; narratives embodied in J have remote reflections; J<sup>2</sup> shows a more direct knowledge of localities and traditions and P a more detailed acquaintance with them. Accordingly Professor Gordon finds this influence prominent during three main periods,

the Amarna, the regal (probably during the reign of Ahaz) and the exilic. This explanation commends itself as more reasonable than those which find Babylonian influence at only one period. The book also renders a great service in combating the prevalent tendency to find the sources of all Hebrew traditions in Babylonia. The author does not underestimate the influence of Babylonian traditions but he also finds those which are purely Israelitish, those introduced by the Kenites and those of Canaanitish origin.

Even more interesting is the attempt to ascertain the true value of the traditions. To this end the material is classified under three heads, mythical narratives, legends with mythical coloring, and historical and heroic legend. Myths have no value for recovering knowledge of actual historical events, but reveal clearly the early moral and religious ideals of the people who gave them shape even when they did not originate them. Legends give idealized pictures of life and character and often contain reminiscences of real historical facts and personalities. In the Hebrew myths, Israel's God is revealed as one God. His position in the universe is unique. He stands above chaos and all nature is obedient to his will. God is conceived anthropomorphically but this is the very life of ancient religions. He is invested with an ethical character. He is righteous and also merciful. The cosmogonies are not scientific in the modern sense, but the emphasis upon God's work in the evolution of nature makes them of permanent religious value. The myths also show a high estimate of the nature and destiny of man. His pre-eminence is shown in the cosmogonies. He is made in the image of God, an idea not unique among the Hebrews but their conception of God as "an elevated ethical personality" gives it special meaning among them. In both nature and destiny man is far superior to him who is presented in the parallel myths of other nations.

The last chapters are devoted to the discussion of the historical worth of the Hebrew legends. Two appendices follow, the first containing a translation of Gen., chaps. I-III, in the chronological order of the documents, together with extensive critical and exegetical notes, and in the second are translations of the more important Babylonian parallels.

In a word, this book is a valuable and welcome piece of constructive criticism by one who has a sympathetic appreciation of all that is elevating in Hebrew tradition. Those who have been troubled by recent historical criticism can read the book and find that they have gained more by scientific research than they have lost.

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